

# Sparta Elementary School



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Christopher R. Barnes, Principal

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To: The Federal Communications Commission  
From: Christopher R. Barnes, Principal, Sparta School  
Re: CC Docket No. 02-06 - E-Rate Funding for Connect-Ed Phone System  
Date: September 5, 2008

As principal of Sparta School, I would like to lend support to the proposed addition of "telephone broadcast messaging" to the list of services eligible for support under the schools and libraries ("E-rate") program.

Improving communications between and among educators, students, and parents can play a vital role in improving educational performance in elementary and secondary schools. Telephone broadcast messaging offers significant advantages and benefits over the less efficient means which schools traditionally used to reach out to students and parents, such as hand-delivered written notices and phone tree messages both of which are subject to tampering or mis-communication.

At Sparta school we use the "Connect Ed" broadcasting system in many ways. I have listed some of the major uses below:

1. Emergency Communication. During a crisis such as a lock-down or a evacuation, the Connect Ed system can call all parent contact numbers at the same time, including cell and work phones. This greatly increases the safety of all members of the community during a crisis.
2. Absence Verification. We can use this system to inform all parents of absences or truancy to thereby facilitate increased classroom attendance.
3. Reminders of Events/Meetings: This feature allows us to record any message that we need to go to parents and even customize the message so that it is sent only to certain groups of parents, designated grade levels or even send to specific students based on gender.

In enacting the E-rate program in 1996, Congress recognized that many schools and libraries have limited resources that constrain their access to emerging technologies that can enhance and support their educational mission. Telephone broadcast messaging, which allows schools to more efficiently and effectively communicate with students and parents, is a prime example of such an emerging technology and should be included within the E-rate program's list of eligible services.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Christopher R. Barnes  
Principal  
Sparta School

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